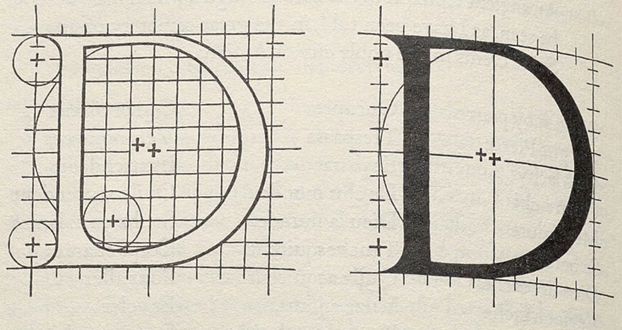

THE letter D, here drawn, and formed of the I and the O, has commonly five centres, but according to some ancient writers only four, because they make a right angle at the foot of the leg on the inner side, as we see in the black letter. D is of equal height and breadth, touching with its extremities the four outer lines of its square. I say again that it is formed of the I and the O, & I might draw it so; but I leave it for those to practise who may choose to divert themselves therewith. I have shown it above in writing of the B, to open the path to those who may wish to follow. It will suffice hereafter when I say that this letter or that letter is formed of the I and O together, or of the I alone, or of the O alone.

The Latins made it as they pleased, as they did their C. In Greek it is triangular, and is called Delta. The Greeks held this said Delta in such high esteem that they made it triangular in memory of the beauty of the island—also triangular—which the Nile, the miracle-working river of Egypt, makes at the place where Memphis lies; & of the shape of Sicily, which is called by the Greeks Triquetra, that is to say, having three mountains which form three corners & angles. And, in like manner, because of the division of the World, which was divided by very ancient writers into three parts, Asia, Africa, and Europe. They held it, I say, in such great veneration that they placed it among the celestial symbols and called it Deltoton, as Hyginus clearly proves in his poem *Astronomia,* when he says: *Deltoton est sidus velut litera græca in triangulo posita. Itaque sic appellatur Mercurius supra caput Arietis statuisse existimatur. Ideo vt obscuritas Arietis huius splendore quo loco esset signifi-*

caretur, et Iouis nomine, græce Διος, *primam literam deformaret. Nonnulli Ægypti positionem, Alij qua Nilus terminaret. Æthiopiam esse, et Ægyptum dixerunt. Alij Siciliam figuratam putauerunt. Alij quod Orbem terrarum superiores trifariam diuiserunt, tres angulos esse constitutos dixerunt.**

* *Caius Julius Hyginus* (A.D. 4), '*Astronomia,*' II, 19.

They made it triangular, in order to denote covertly that its shape is one of the noblest and most notable in geometry and commensuration, and one which is most essential for designing & drawing letters. The Latins made it straight in front, like an I, & rounded at the back, like an O, to show that it must be pronounced by striking the tongue against the front teeth; and this Martianus Capella attests when he says: D *appulsu linguæ circa superiores dentes innascitur.*

In Rome, at the Sapienza, that is, at the public school, and in many other places in Italy, I have heard many learned men pronounce it as if it had an E written after it: when they wished to say *Quid, Quod, Aliquid,* they pronounced them *Quide, Quode, Aliquide.* And this means that we should pronounce it with the impetus of our tongue striking against our front teeth. They pronounced T also as if it had an E in its train, saying *Capute, Sincipute,* for *Caput* and *Sinciput; Amauite, Docuite,* for *Amauit* and *Docuit;* & in like manner many another similar word. I would that we were as diligent in accustoming our children to pronounce rightly as the Italians are; that would give us great joy & honour. The ancient Latins wrote V for E before ND, in the gerunds and participles of the third conjugation: they said *Scribundis* and *Legundis* for *Scribendis* and *Legendis.* Terence says: *In scribundis fabulis operam abutitur.*† Priscian attests it in his first book, when he says:

Apud antiquissimos quoties ND *sequuntur in his quæ a Tertia Coniugatione nascuntur, loco* E, V, *scriptum inuenimus: vt faciundum, legundum, dicundum, vertundum, pro faciendum, legendum, dicendum, vertendum.* ‡

† '*Andria,*' *Prologue,* 5. *The original has: 'In prologis scribundis,' etc.—'In the writing of prologues he uses every effort.'*

‡ I, VI, 32.

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